

## STEP TEN

*"Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it."*

By the time we approached Step Ten most of us felt a sense of accomplishment. We had begun to develop a relationship with a Higher Power we could understand. We had learned a great deal about our own responsibility for our past troubles. We discovered we could share our innermost secrets with another person. And we had made some amends, an action we could not have imagined prior to our experience with the Twelve Steps. We were grateful, relieved, and above all, encouraged. Maybe now, after all this work, our lives would really improve.

It was then that we were pointed in the direction of Step Ten. Some of us became overwhelmed at the thought of making a commitment to continual inventory and amends and we may have lapsed into fear and denial, eliminating this Step without even realizing it. We learned that what we needed was some time to reflect on our spiritual and emotional progress in Co-Dependents Anonymous.

In the beginning of our time in CoDA, most of us had felt alone, confused, and even ashamed, wondering why we needed a program when all we wanted was to help others, to "run the show," or to fade into the background. For many of us, the pain we carried was overwhelming. We often felt hopeless, with little chance for escape or renewal. It was in this frame of mind that we embarked upon Step One. Time passed and as we worked the Steps our approach to living changed.

The message in the Tenth Step became clear: why stop now? We had personal proof that change was possible, not only for those who had gone before us, but for ourselves as well. Just as Steps Four through Nine offered us the chance to "clean up" our past, Step Ten would be the means to maintain **continued** spiritual growth. This became our commitment to continuous, rigorous honesty.

### **Continued To Take Personal Inventory.....**

Those of us who worked Step Ten discovered several ways to approach the first portion of it. Many of us drew up a balance sheet at the end of each day or week, listing our assets and liabilities.

The form was simple, we began with what we did right. Perhaps we supported our own sense of value by graciously accepting a compliment or by

requesting help when we needed it. If we set some time aside for ourselves just to have fun or if we avoided giving unsolicited advice, we jotted it down in our "asset" column.

When we made the list of debits, we were careful to examine our motives in each act or event listed. Were we acting out of fear, shame, or hurt? Or perhaps we discovered another defect of character — a new one.

There were times when we experienced confusion about something on our balance sheet. When that occurred, we consulted with our sponsor or another CoDA friend.

Some of us found the "spot-check" method could be of additional assistance. We used this in several ways. If we became aware we were carrying around a fear or a resentment, we often didn't want to wait until our regular inventory time to handle it. We took some quiet time, as soon as possible, to sort out the incident, staying focused on **our own responsibility, our own reactions, and our own feelings.**

Sometimes we found we could use this "spot-check" inventory in the **middle** of a difficult situation, mentally choosing a healthier response than our character defect would otherwise allow.

There were times it seemed we were being nagged by feelings of fear, rage, hurt, or shame with no clear explanation. During these situations we put the first three Steps into action. We acknowledged our powerlessness over this condition and affirmed our belief in God's power to bring us to balance. Then, we asked our Higher Power to reveal what we needed to know about this situation. Usually the answer came and we could take whatever action we thought was appropriate. If it seemed slow in coming, we asked for patience and faith.

### **.....And When We Were Wrong, Promptly Admitted It.**

Step Ten seemed to suggest that we had made some progress, that we had become capable of handling our lives with even greater maturity than we believed possible. **"When we were wrong,"** reminded us that not every unpleasant situation was our doing. It suggested we could cultivate the willingness to admit our wrongs when the fault was ours and the courage to set boundaries when the fault lay elsewhere.

This action did not come easily. Many times we looked for excuses for our behavior. Attempting to rationalize or justify our actions and motives

became a defense against facing the shame we feared we would feel by appearing to be less than perfect.

"I can't possibly acknowledge my wrongdoing to **that** person. I'd look like a fool."

The agony of exposure seemed overwhelming.

There were other times when we felt motivated by our past belief that we were always at fault. Perhaps we were the object of a verbal attack and in order to bring it to a close we apologized for a wrongdoing for which we were not responsible.

In any of these situations we could ask for help, both from God and from the CoDA fellowship. We listened to stories told by those who had already worked this step and we learned that our fear or confusion was not unique. Most importantly, we asked God to be with us when we made these new amends, whether they were to another or to ourselves.

When we returned to our old patterns of co-dependence we were encouraged to be gentle with ourselves. The disciplines we were learning were not easy and our old survival skills were difficult to release. We could comfort ourselves with the knowledge that our goal was **"progress, not perfection."**

For many of us, **promptly** admitting our wrongs seemed almost impossible. When we worked Steps Eight and Nine, we took the time we felt we needed to make a careful list of those to whom we owed an amends. In order to gain a little confidence, we often chose to make amends first to the person with whom we felt the safest. The most difficult amends we tackled later.

Having completed the Ninth Step, we found ourselves with an even greater challenge, facing and admitting our wrongdoings in a **timely** manner.

It was hard enough to acknowledge our misdeed to another without hesitation, but what about promptly making amends to **ourselves**? How could we best achieve this part of Step Ten? Most of us found it a difficult suggestion to remember, much less to put into action.

Trial and error taught us first to admit we were not yet experts at supporting and nurturing **ourselves.** Many of us needed more practice in defining and accepting our boundaries. Some of us still hadn't learned to say, **"no."** For most of us, simply to stop berating ourselves for every real or

imagined mistake, whether large or small, would be a major "self-amends."

In CoDA, we learned to counteract our internalized self-abuse by speaking to ourselves with kindness. For example, when we noticed ourselves ruminating over our imagined lack of progress in the program, we reflected on what we were thinking, feeling, and doing on the day of our first meeting. Perhaps we had made some improvement after all. When we repeatedly fussed with ourselves for not handling situations more effectively, we looked for ways to stop our self-harassment. Some asked their Higher Power to remove the negative thinking. Others set time limits for themselves. "You've fussed with yourself for five minutes straight — time's up for today."

Another method we found to be valuable in this "self-amends" process was to plan some fun. So much of our lives had been spent taking care of others, controlling others, and being serious, that our childlike selves had become neglected and ignored. Even into recovery, many of us, fearful of spontaneity, maintained a serious attitude.

The Tenth Step offered us the opportunity to change that, too. We could play on a set of swings, stand on our heads, or make faces in the mirror. Feeling somewhat uneasy at the prospect of play, most of us discovered we needed to make a commitment to have fun and to share that fun with others. We did this to insure we would really take this action, rather than to think about taking it.

The results we obtained by working the Twelve Steps never ceased to amaze us. In those moments when fear, shame, and self-criticism ceased, we discovered the freedom of our new found vulnerability. Life took on the joyful expectation of an exciting adventure.

*In this moment, I live my life in a new way. As I continue to open my heart and mind, little by little, one day at a time, I reveal my **True Self**, mend my relationships, and touch God.*

Having made the commitment to be aware of our actions and to set right any new transgressions promptly, we became ready to work Step Eleven.

**\*Step Ten.** "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it."

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### **GOD**

*Grant me the*

### **SERENITY**

*to accept things*

*I cannot change,*

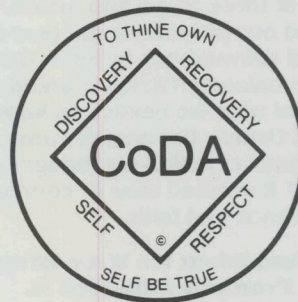
### **COURAGE**

*to change things*

*I can and*

### **WISDOM**

*to know the difference.*



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Co-Dependents Anonymous, Inc.  
P.O. Box 33577  
Phoenix, Arizona 85067-3577  
(602) 277-7991



# CO-DEPENDENTS ANONYMOUS

## STEP

# 10

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